

IN THE CLAIMS:

The following listing of claims shall replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the patent application:

1-4. (Canceled)

5. (Currently amended) ~~The platform lift apparatus of Claim 4,~~ A platform lift apparatus for use in moving objects between floors of a structure, comprising:

a frame having internal and external mounting surfaces, the external mounting surfaces being adapted to be secured to a framed opening between the floors;

a drive mechanism substantially disposed within said frame and coupled to said internal mounting surfaces, said drive mechanism including a plurality of rotatable, parallel shafts with each shaft further including at least one lift drum having an associated lift tether at least partially wound thereon and having an end hanging therefrom; and

a platform, the hanging ends of said lift tethers cooperating to suspend the platform from said frame, said platform being selectively movable by operation of said drive mechanism in a vertical direction between raised and lowered positions;

wherein each one of said plurality of parallel shafts further comprises at least one drive pulley, said drive mechanism further comprising a drive belt coupled to respective drive pulleys of each of said plurality of parallel shafts, said plurality of shafts being driven to rotation by operation of said drive mechanism;

wherein said drive belt further comprises a continuous loop, said plurality of shafts being driven to synchronous rotation by operation of said drive mechanism.

6-7. (Cancelled)

8. (Currently amended) ~~The platform lift apparatus of Claim 7,~~ A platform lift apparatus, comprising:

a frame having internal and external mounting surfaces, the external mounting surfaces being adapted to fixedly engage an opening provided in a horizontal supporting surface;

a drive mechanism substantially disposed within said frame and coupled to said internal mounting surfaces, said drive mechanism including a plurality of rotatable, parallel shafts with each shaft further including at least one lift drum having an associated lift tether at least partially wound thereon and having an end hanging therefrom; and

a platform, the hanging ends of said lift tethers cooperating to suspend the platform from said frame, said platform being selectively movable by operation of said drive mechanism in a vertical direction between raised and lowered positions relative to the horizontal supporting surface;

wherein said platform further comprises a horizontal base and a plurality of vertical walls defining a basket, and wherein said platform further comprises a foldable fence connected to said vertical walls.

9-10. (Canceled)

11. (Previously presented) A platform lift apparatus, comprising:
a frame having internal and external mounting surfaces;
a drive mechanism substantially disposed within said frame and coupled to said internal mounting surfaces, said drive mechanism including a plurality of rotatable, parallel shafts with each shaft further including at least one lift drum having an associated lift tether at least partially wound thereon and having an end hanging therefrom; and
a platform, the hanging ends of said lift tethers cooperating to suspend the platform from said frame, said platform being selectively movable by operation of said drive mechanism in a vertical direction between raised and lowered positions;
wherein said drive mechanism further comprises at least one tensioner associated with said at least one lift drum, said at least one tensioner being disposed in contact with said lift tether associated with said at least one lift drum to prevent twisting or kinking of said lift tether while winding on or unwinding from said at least one lift drum.

12. (Original) The platform lift apparatus of Claim 11, wherein said at least one tensioner further comprises a contact member and a spring biasing said contact member into contact with said lift tether.

13. (Original) The platform lift apparatus of Claim 12, wherein said contact member further comprises a roller in contact with said lift tether.

14-16. (Canceled)

17. (Previously presented) A platform lift apparatus, comprising:

a frame having internal and external mounting surfaces;

a drive mechanism substantially disposed within said frame and coupled to said internal mounting surfaces, said drive mechanism including a plurality of rotatable, parallel shafts with each shaft further including at least one lift drum having an associated lift tether at least partially wound thereon and having an end hanging therefrom;

a platform, the hanging ends of said lift tethers cooperating to suspend the platform from said frame, said platform being selectively movable by operation of said drive mechanism in a vertical direction between raised and lowered positions; and

means coupled to an underside of said platform for detecting impact of said platform upon an object.

18. (Previously presented) A platform lift apparatus, comprising:

a frame having internal and external mounting surfaces;

a drive mechanism substantially disposed within said frame and coupled to said internal mounting surfaces, said drive mechanism including a plurality of rotatable, parallel shafts with each shaft further including at least one lift drum having an associated lift tether at least partially wound thereon and having an end hanging therefrom;

a platform, the hanging ends of said lift tethers cooperating to suspend the platform from said frame, said platform being selectively movable by operation of said drive mechanism in a vertical direction between raised and lowered positions; and

a contact plate and a plurality of springs coupling said contact plate to an underside of said platform, said contact plate thereby being moveable vertically against bias applied by said plurality of springs.

19. (Original) The platform lift apparatus of Claim 18, further comprising a plurality of microswitches associated respectively with said plurality of springs, each one of said plurality of microswitches being adapted to close and provide a corresponding signal upon compression of an associated one of said plurality of springs.

20. (Previously presented) A platform lift apparatus, comprising:
a frame having internal and external mounting surfaces, the external mounting surfaces being adapted to fixedly engage an opening provided in a horizontal supporting surface;
a drive mechanism substantially disposed within said frame and coupled to said internal mounting surfaces, said drive mechanism including a plurality of rotatable, parallel shafts with each shaft further including at least one lift drum having an associated lift tether at least partially wound thereon and having an end hanging therefrom;
a platform, the hanging ends of said lift tethers cooperating to suspend the platform from said frame, said platform being selectively movable by operation of said drive mechanism in a vertical direction between raised and lowered positions relative to the horizontal supporting surface; and
a retractable wheel coupled to an underside of said platform.

21-26. (Canceled)

27. (Currently amended) ~~The platform lift apparatus of Claim 26,~~ A platform lift apparatus for use in moving objects between floors of a structure, comprising:

a frame having internal and external mounting surfaces, the external mounting surfaces being adapted to be secured to a framed opening between the floors;

a drive mechanism substantially disposed within said frame and coupled to said internal mounting surfaces, said drive mechanism including first and second rotatable, parallel shafts supported by said frame, said first shaft further including at least one lift drum and at least one drive pulley, said second shaft further including at least one lift drum, each said lift drum of said first and second shafts having an associated lift tether at least partially wound thereon and having an end hanging therefrom, said at least one drive pulley of said first shaft being operatively coupled to said second shaft to permit simultaneous rotation of said first shaft and said second shaft; and

a platform, the hanging ends of said lift tethers cooperating to suspend the platform from said frame, said platform being selectively movable by operation of said drive mechanism in a vertical direction between a raised position substantially in contact with said frame and a lowered position within a space below said frame;

wherein said platform further comprises a horizontal base and a plurality of vertical walls defining a basket, and wherein said platform further comprises a foldable fence connected to said vertical walls.

28. (Currently amended) The platform lift apparatus of Claim 24 27, wherein each said lift tether further comprises a releasable fastener coupled to a corresponding member on said platform.

29. (Currently amended) ~~The platform lift apparatus of Claim 21,~~ A platform lift apparatus for use in moving objects between floors of a structure, comprising:

a frame having internal and external mounting surfaces, the external mounting surfaces being adapted to be secured to a framed opening between the floors;

a drive mechanism substantially disposed within said frame and coupled to said internal mounting surfaces, said drive mechanism including first and second rotatable, parallel shafts supported by said frame, said first shaft further including at least one lift drum and at least one drive pulley, said second shaft further including at least one lift drum, each said lift drum of said first and second shafts having an associated lift tether at least partially wound thereon and having an end hanging therefrom, said at least one drive pulley of said first shaft being operatively coupled to said second shaft to permit simultaneous rotation of said first shaft and said second shaft; and

a platform, the hanging ends of said lift tethers cooperating to suspend the platform from said frame, said platform being selectively movable by operation of said drive mechanism in a vertical direction between a raised position substantially in contact with said frame and a lowered position within a space below said frame;

wherein said platform further comprises a seal providing a barrier between said platform and said frame when said platform is at said raised position.

30. (Currently amended) ~~The platform lift apparatus of Claim 21,~~ A platform lift apparatus for use in moving objects between floors of a structure, comprising:

a frame having internal and external mounting surfaces, the external mounting surfaces being adapted to be secured to a framed opening between the floors;

a drive mechanism substantially disposed within said frame and coupled to said internal mounting surfaces, said drive mechanism including first and second rotatable, parallel shafts supported by said frame, said first shaft further including at least one lift drum and at least one drive pulley, said second shaft further including at least one lift drum, each said lift drum of said first and second shafts having an associated lift tether at least partially wound thereon and having an end hanging therefrom, said at least one drive pulley of said first shaft being operatively coupled to said second shaft to permit simultaneous rotation of said first shaft and said second shaft; and

a platform, the hanging ends of said lift tethers cooperating to suspend the platform from said frame, said platform being selectively movable by operation of said drive mechanism in a vertical direction between a raised position substantially in contact with said frame and a lowered position within a space below said frame;

wherein said drive mechanism further comprises at least one tensioner associated with said at least one lift drum, said at least one tensioner being disposed in contact with said lift tether associated with said at least one lift drum to prevent twisting or kinking of said lift tether while winding on or unwinding from said at least one lift drum.

31. (Original) The platform lift apparatus of Claim 30, wherein said at least one tensioner further comprises a contact member and a spring biasing said contact member into contact with said lift tether.

32. (Original) The platform lift apparatus of Claim 31, wherein said contact member further comprises a roller biased in contact with said lift tether.

33. (Canceled)

34. (Currently amended) The platform lift apparatus of Claim 24 29, wherein said first and second shafts are offset vertically with respect to each other.

35. (Currently amended) The platform lift apparatus of Claim 24 29, wherein said second shaft further comprises at least one drive pulley, said at least one drive pulley of said first shaft being operatively coupled to said at least one drive pulley of said second shaft by a continuous belt.

36. (Currently amended) ~~The platform lift apparatus of Claim 21,~~ A platform lift apparatus for use in moving objects between floors of a structure, comprising:

a frame having internal and external mounting surfaces, the external mounting surfaces being adapted to be secured to a framed opening between the floors;

a drive mechanism substantially disposed within said frame and coupled to said internal mounting surfaces, said drive mechanism including first and second rotatable, parallel shafts supported by said frame, said first shaft further including at least one lift drum and at least one drive pulley, said second shaft further including at least one lift drum, each said lift drum of said first and second shafts having an associated lift tether at least partially wound thereon and having an end hanging therefrom, said at least one drive pulley of said first shaft being operatively coupled to said second shaft to permit simultaneous rotation of said first shaft and said second shaft; and

a platform, the hanging ends of said lift tethers cooperating to suspend the platform from said frame, said platform being selectively movable by operation of said drive mechanism in a vertical direction between a raised position substantially in contact with said frame and a lowered position within a space below said frame;

wherein said at least one lift drum on said second shaft further comprises an idler lift drum operatively coupled to said at least one drive pulley of said first shaft.

37. (Currently amended) ~~The platform lift apparatus of Claim 21, further comprising~~ A platform lift apparatus for use in moving objects between floors of a structure, comprising:

a frame having internal and external mounting surfaces, the external mounting surfaces being adapted to be secured to a framed opening between the floors;

a drive mechanism substantially disposed within said frame and coupled to said internal mounting surfaces, said drive mechanism including first and second rotatable, parallel shafts supported by said frame, said first shaft further including at least one lift drum and at least one drive pulley, said second shaft further including at least one lift drum, each said lift drum of said first and second shafts having an associated lift tether at least partially wound thereon and having an end hanging therefrom, said at least one drive pulley of said first shaft being operatively coupled to said second shaft to permit simultaneous rotation of said first shaft and said second shaft;

a platform, the hanging ends of said lift tethers cooperating to suspend the platform from said frame, said platform being selectively movable by operation of said drive mechanism in a vertical direction between a raised position substantially in contact with said frame and a lowered position within a space below said frame; and

means coupled to an underside of said platform for detecting impact of said platform upon an object.

38. (Currently amended) ~~The platform lift apparatus of Claim 21, further comprising~~ A platform lift apparatus for use in moving objects between floors of a structure, comprising:

a frame having internal and external mounting surfaces, the external mounting surfaces being adapted to be secured to a framed opening between the floors;

a drive mechanism substantially disposed within said frame and coupled to said internal mounting surfaces, said drive mechanism including first and second rotatable, parallel shafts supported by said frame, said first shaft further including at least one lift drum and at least one drive pulley, said second shaft further including at least one lift drum, each said lift drum of said first and second shafts having an associated lift tether at least partially wound thereon and having an end hanging therefrom, said at least one drive pulley of said first shaft being operatively coupled to said second shaft to permit simultaneous rotation of said first shaft and said second shaft;

a platform, the hanging ends of said lift tethers cooperating to suspend the platform from said frame, said platform being selectively movable by operation of said drive mechanism in a vertical direction between a raised position substantially in contact with said frame and a lowered position within a space below said frame; and

a contact plate and a plurality of springs coupling said contact plate to an underside of said platform, said contact plate thereby being moveable vertically against bias applied by said plurality of springs.

39. (Original) The platform lift apparatus of Claim 38, further comprising a plurality of microswitches associated respectively with said plurality of springs, each one of said plurality of microswitches being adapted to close and provide a corresponding signal upon compression of an associated one of said plurality of springs.

40. (Currently amended) ~~The platform lift apparatus of Claim 21, further comprising~~ A platform lift apparatus for use in moving objects between floors of a structure, comprising:

a frame having internal and external mounting surfaces, the external mounting surfaces being adapted to be secured to a framed opening between the floors;

a drive mechanism substantially disposed within said frame and coupled to said internal mounting surfaces, said drive mechanism including first and second rotatable, parallel shafts supported by said frame, said first shaft further including at least one lift drum and at least one drive pulley, said second shaft further including at least one lift drum, each said lift drum of said first and second shafts having an associated lift tether at least partially wound thereon and having an end hanging therefrom, said at least one drive pulley of said first shaft being operatively coupled to said second shaft to permit simultaneous rotation of said first shaft and said second shaft;

a platform, the hanging ends of said lift tethers cooperating to suspend the platform from said frame, said platform being selectively movable by operation of said drive mechanism in a vertical direction between a raised position substantially in contact with said frame and a lowered position within a space below said frame; and

a retractable wheel coupled to an underside of said platform.

41-42. (Canceled)

43. (Currently amended) The platform lift apparatus of Claim 7 8, wherein the lift tethers further comprise a metal cable material, and the lift drums are provided with grooves to guide the lift tethers.

44. (Currently amended) The platform lift apparatus of Claim 24 29, wherein the lift tethers further comprise a metal cable material, and the lift drums are provided with grooves to guide the lift tethers.